

Patent claims

1. A continuous process for preparing sugar alcohols by catalytic hydrogenation of an aqueous solution of a saccharide, which forms the corresponding sugar alcohol on hydrogenation, in the presence of a ruthenium catalyst which is obtainable by:
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- i) single or multiple treatment of an amorphous silicon-dioxide-based support material with a halogen-free aqueous solution of a low-molecular-weight ruthenium compound and subsequent drying of the treated support material at below 200°C,
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- ii) reducing the solid obtained in i) with hydrogen at from 100 to 350°C,
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- step ii) being carried out immediately after step i), which comprises, before the hydrogenation, bringing the aqueous saccharide solution to be hydrogenated into contact with the support material.
2. The process according to claim 1, wherein the sugar alcohol prepared is sorbitol or xylitol.
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3. The process according to claim 1, wherein the aqueous saccharide solution is a wheat starch hydrolyzate or corn starch hydrolyzate.
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4. The process according to one of the preceding claims, wherein the aqueous saccharide solution, before the hydrogenation, is forced through silica rods.